



Slave Ship Manifests filed at New Orleans, 1807-1860

Slave Manifests of Coastwise Vessels Filed at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1807-1860

Introduction

On the 30 rolls of NARA Microfilm Publication M1895, *Slave Manifests of Coastwise Vessels Filed at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1807-1860* (30 rolls), are reproduced manifests filed with the collector of customs at New Orleans, Louisiana, of slaves transported in coastwise trade to or from New Orleans during the period 1807-1860. They are part of Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group (RG) 36, and are the records imperfectly identified as Series 1630, "Slave Manifests, 1819-52, 1860-61," in Forrest R. Holdcamper, comp., Preliminary Inventory NC-154, *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of Bureau of the Customs* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1968). The original records are housed at the National Archives at Fort Worth.

Background

The U.S. Constitution did not mention slavery or the slave trade directly, but only through oblique references. One of those provisions was Article I,

The Schooner Thomas Hunter



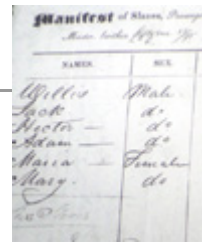
The Schooner Thomas Hunter, which departed from Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 1835, arrived at New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 11, 1835, with 5 slaves identified with a full first and last name. M1895, Roll 7. [Larger image](#) | [Hi-res image](#)

The Schooner Wild Cat

The Schooner Wild Cat, which departed from Charleston, South Carolina, September 1, 1832, arrived at New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 24, 1832, with 6 slaves identified only by first name.

Section 9, which states that:

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.



M1895, Roll 7.
Larger image | Hi-res image

This provision was born from the sectional struggle in the Constitutional Convention between the northern and southern delegates over three separate issues that had no logical connection. South Carolina delegate Gen. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney insisted that his state and Georgia could not "do without slaves," and John Rutledge of South Carolina threatened that the three states of the lower South would secede unless permitted to continue this traffic. The Southern states also insisted that export taxes be outlawed and that a navigation act restricting shipping to American-flag vessels could only be enacted by a two-thirds majority of Congress. The delegates reached a compromise that forbade Federal interference with the slave trade for 20 years, forbade Federal taxes on exports, but allowed a navigation act to be passed by a simple majority like any other law. [See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*, vol. 1, *Prehistory to 1789*, p. 400 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1972)].

In 1807, Congress outlawed the African slave trade effective on January 1, 1808 (2 Stat. 426), and in 1820 declared it to be piracy punishable by death (3 Stat. 600-601). Remaining unimpaired, however, were the rights to buy and sell slaves, and to transport them from one slave state to another.

Cotton production grew in economic importance after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. The South nearly doubled its annual production from 1820 to 1830, doubled it again by 1840, and tripled it again by 1860. By the outbreak of the Civil War, over half the value of American goods shipped abroad was in cotton. A broad belt of Southern land, ranging in width from about 500 miles in the Carolinas and Georgia to 600 or 700 miles in the Mississippi Valley, was devoted primarily to cotton culture. The lower South's wealth came chiefly from cotton produced by slaves, although smaller numbers of slaves were also used profitably in the Carolina-Georgia rice fields along the coast, and in the production of Louisiana sugarcane. [See John D. Hicks, *The Federal Union: A History of the United States to 1865*, p. 493 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937)].

As cotton growing expanded from Alabama to Texas, the lower South's need for slaves increased also. At the same time, the planters of the upper South had an oversupply of slave labor. Tobacco-raisers in such states as Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky were suffering from the continued exhaustion of the soil and decline of their export trade. As a consequence,

surplus slaves were transported from the one region to the other by slave traders. In 1836, the peak year of this traffic, over 120,000 slaves from Virginia alone were sold in the lower South. In the 1840s and 1850s, the domestic slave trade slowed somewhat due to a revival of agriculture in the upper South that was partly due to the discovery of better methods of curing tobacco and the introduction of new and superior varieties. [See John D. Hicks, *The Federal Union: A History of the United States to 1865*, p. 497 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937)].

Records Description

The act of March 2, 1807 (2 Stat. 426), which outlawed the slave trade, also imposed regulations on the coastal transportation of slaves. Effective January 1, 1808, vessels under 40 tons in coastwise trade were prohibited from transporting slaves. The captain or master of vessels over 40 tons in coastwise trade was required to provide a manifest of slave cargo to the collector of customs at the port of departure and at the port of arrival, or to the surveyor if there was no collector of customs at the port. Specifically, the act provided as follows:

Sec. 9. . . . That the captain, master, or commander of any ship or vessel of the burthen of forty tons or more . . . sailing coastwise, from any port in the United States, to any port or place within the jurisdiction of the same, having on board any negro, mulatto, or person of colour, for the purpose of transporting them to be sold or disposed of as slaves, or to be held to service or labour, shall, previous to the departure of such ship or vessel, make out and subscribe duplicate manifests of every such negro, mulatto, or person of colour, on board such ship or vessel, therein specifying the name and sex of each person, their age and stature, . . . whether negro, mulatto, or person of colour, with the name and place of residence of every owner or shipper of the same, and shall deliver such manifests to the collector of the port, if there be one, otherwise to the surveyor, before whom the captain, master, or commander, together with the owner or shipper, shall severally swear or affirm to the best of their knowledge and belief that the persons therein specified were not imported or brought into the United States [after January 1, 1808], and that under the laws of the state, they are held to service or labour; whereupon the said collector or surveyor shall certify the same on the said manifests, one of which he shall return to the said captain, master, or commander, . . . and authorizing him to proceed to the port of his destination.

Sec. 10. . . . That the captain, master, or commander . . . shall, previous to the unlading or putting on shore any of the persons aforesaid . . . deliver to the collector, if there be one, or if not, to the surveyor residing at the port of her arrival, the manifest certified by the collector or surveyor of the port from whence she sailed, as is herein before directed, to the truth of which, before such officer, he shall swear or affirm, and ... the collector or surveyor . . . shall thereupon grant a permit for unlading or suffering such negro, mulatto, or person of colour, to be put on shore. . . .

The records included in this microfilm publication are the "inward manifests" required by Section 10 of this act to be filed upon arrival at New Orleans, as well as the "outward manifests" required by Section 9 of the act to be filed before departure from New Orleans. Not all manifests are extant. No inward manifests have survived from the years 1808-1818 and 1858, and no outward manifests have survived from the years 1813-1817, 1837, and 1859. Some manifests may have been lost from the years for which manifests are extant.

The manifests are pre-printed fill-in-the-blank forms of various sizes. They include the name of the vessel, its ports of departure and arrival, dates of certification by the collector of customs (or surveyor), the captain or master's name, and a description of each slave on the vessel, including name, age, sex, height, name of owner or shipper, and color. In addition to the official color designations of "negro, mulatto, or person of colour," many manifests indicate the slaves' skin color as black, brown, yellow, tawney [sic], dark, or copper.

It is assumed that the date of certification by the collector (or surveyor) regarding the accuracy of the manifest was the same as the date of arrival or departure. The manifests are arranged chronologically, but there may be some disarrangement, and researchers are advised to search an entire year if a vessel's known arrival or departure on a particular date is not found in the chronological sequence. For 1821-1827 inward manifests, there is a segment of "miscellaneous" manifests following each year's main sequence of inward manifests.

Ports of departure and intended ports of arrival range as far north as Baltimore, Maryland, on the Atlantic coast, and as far west as Texas ports on the Gulf of Mexico.

For More Information

For more information about the slave trade within the United States, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA/London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999) and Ralph Clayton, *Cash for Blood: The Baltimore to New Orleans Domestic Slave Trade* (Baltimore, MD: Heritage Books, 2002).

Roll List

New Roll	Old Roll	Type	Date Span
1	1-2	Inward	1807, 1808-18 (none), 1819-21
2	3		1822
3	4-5		1823-25
4	6		1826-27
5	7		1828
6	8-9		1829-31

7	10-11		1832-36
8	12-13		1837-41
9	14		1842-43
10	15		1844-45
11	16-17		1846-47
12	18-19		1848-50
13	20-21		1851-52
14	22		1853-54
15	23		1855-56
16	24-25		1857, 1858 (none), 1859-Sept. 1860
17	1	Outward	1812 (one), 1813-17 (none), 1818-23
18	2		1824-27
19	3		Jan.-Oct. 28, 1828
20	3A		Oct. 30, 1828-1833
21	4A		1834-36, 1837 (none)
22	4B		1838-40
23	5		1841-45
24	6		1846-Nov. 1847
25	6A		Nov. 1847-June 1850
26	7		July 1850-Mar. 12, 1853
27	7A		Mar. 12-Dec. 1853
28	8		1854-55
29	9		1856-57

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9A

1858, 1859 (none), Mar.-Sept. 1860

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